MONTEREY NEWS

February 2021
Est. 1970 Vol. LI · Number 2

Pick up at: the library (in and outside), outside town hall, transfer station

I watch the flames until I see
the windows darken a degree,
and icicles run down these walls
The Ice Storm page 13

"It's because I'm black, isn't it?" she cried out. "It is, isn't it? Because I'm black."
Here's a Thought page 21

The town always benefits by having a full slate of candidates so that no office remains unfilled.
Town Elections page 2

You can check by going to mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine-in-massachusetts to keep up to date.
Council on Aging page 3

There I was at center ice, about to face off.
A Life on Skates page 14

Happy Valentine's Day, Julie Johnston

The experience was less like reading a book than embarking on an adventure to Scandinavia in the Middle Ages.
Under the Spell of Undset page 10

"We should have a party to determine who is the oldest person in Monterey that can still make a snow angel!"
MCC Volunteeers page 5

It's worth remembering that the true cost of owning things is the "life cycle" cost, from purchasing, to using and maintaining, to disposal.
Transfer Station page 4

Ice images by Natalie Manzino

Is this a love story? Of course. This is February, valentine month for everyone, and spring is coming.
February Foxes page 9

We have all re-evaluated our lives
We've had to determine what is important.
Living the Natural Life page 7

Upcoming Town Elections

Below is the list of offices that may be voted upon at town elections on Tuesday, May 1. There may be more additional seats available on boards, committees, or individual offices depending on resignations during terms.

Board of Appeals (1) 5 years
Board of Assessors (1) 3 years
Board of Health (1) 3 years
Cemetery Committee (1) 3 years
Finance Committee (1) 3 years
Library Trustees (2) 3 years
Moderator (1) 1 year
Parks Commission (1) 1 year
Parks Commission (2) 3 years
Planning Board (1) 5 years
Planning Board (1) 4 years
Select Board (1) 3 years
Tree Warden (1) 1 year

The town always benefits by having a full slate of candidates so that no office remains unfilled. To get on the ballot for any of these positions, a registered Monterey voter must be nominated by one of the party caucuses or gather at least twenty-five certifiable voters signatures on a nomination paper filed with the town clerk. A candidate does not need to be registered to a party to seek nomination from either or both parties. For more information about seeking party nominations, see "Town Party Meetings" at the right.

The last day to submit nomination papers to the registrars of voters is Tuesday, March 16. The last day for town party caucuses to make nominations is on Saturday, March 27, although it is likely that the party caucuses will be held sooner than that. The certification of caucus nominations will be done by Tuesday, March 30. The last time to object or withdraw a nomination is Thursday, April 1, at 5 p.m.

The last day to register to vote is Saturday, April 10, from 2 to 4 p.m., and from 7 to 8 p.m., at town hall.

The *Monterey News* is published monthly by The Monterey News Inc, PO Box 9, Monterey, MA 01245-0009.

Town Party Meetings

To be a candidate for a town office, one needs to be nominated to be placed on the ballot. Any registered voter can seek a nomination from either or both parties at the caucuses. A candidate can also take out papers independently and seek a nomination by getting signatures from twenty-five registered Monterey voters.

Caucuses

The Republican and Democratic committees anticipate meeting on Saturday, March 20. Look for more specific information in the March issue of the *Monterey News*. For questions or further information, you can email Mark Makuc, Republican Town Committee, at mjjminmonterey@yahoo.com; or Jon Sylbert, Democratic Town Committee, at monterey-dems@outlook.com.

The last day permissible for the town to publish the town warrant in advance of town meeting, which will be mailed to all registered town voters, is on Saturday, April 24.

The annual town meeting will be held on Saturday, May 1. Election of town officers will follow on Tuesday, May 4.

For questions or further information, contact Terry Walker, Monterey Town Clerk, by calling (413) 528-1443, ext. 113, or by emailing at clerk@montereyma.gov

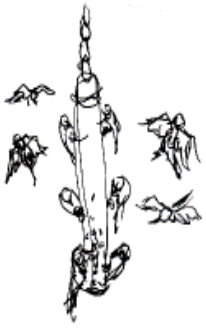
Candidate Statements

Town elections are upon us once again. Elections for town offices are on Tuesday, May 4, following town meeting the prior Saturday. If you have been nominated for an office, or filed nomination papers for yourself, you may want to publish a candidate's statement in the *Monterey News*. The paper will be happy to publish candidate statements in either the March or April issue as the elections are so close to the beginning of May.

The *News* would also be pleased to publish letters of support for candidates. It would be helpful if you know of others who are intending to write in support of the same candidate to agree on one letter to be published.

Also, please feel free to offer a perspective on any issues to be decided at town meeting by sending a letter to the *News*. Part of the mission of the paper is to encourage community conversations.

The deadline for the *Monterey News* is typically on the 20th of each month. Your letters must be signed, and can be emailed (preferred) to MontereyNews9@gmail.com, or sent first class, to PO Box 9, Monterey, MA 01245.



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WiredWest Deposit Refunds

On January 19, the select board received a notice from WiredWest about the 154 Monterey residents who deposited $49 with the company but failed to request a refund. WiredWest deposits reverted to the Commonwealth on December 31, 2020, and noted that those affected could apply for return of their deposit at findmassmoney.com.

On behalf of the select board, I immediately contacted WiredWest to see if we could get the contact information of the affected residents. WiredWest explained that it was not permitted to provide that information.

Anyone wanting to get their money back can use findmassmoney.com, a private company suggested by WiredWest, or can apply directly to the Commonwealth. The contact email is UnclaimedProperty@tre.state.mass.us; or write to the Unclaimed Property Division, 1 Ashburton Place, 12th floor, Boston, MA 02108; or call (617) 367-0400.

—Don Coburn
Chair, Select board

Council on Aging

Food Assistance

The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts reports that due to the stimulus program there is a temporary increase in SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits. To apply call (413) 992-6204. There are income guidelines, but there is no gross monthly income limit if you are over sixty and/or disabled. Medical bills may be considered. Currently, unemployment benefits are allowed. The Food Bank also delivers a monthly "Brown Bag" of groceries for seniors to the senior center in Great Barrington for our pickup. It's worth a call. Monterey's Pantry Pickup is a beneficiary of this program.

Vaccination Phases

We are aware everyone is anxious to get the Covid-19 vaccine. It's supposed to be in February sometime for those over sixty-five as part of Phase 2. You can check by going to mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine-in-massachusetts to keep up to date. It has a graph with time lines for different categories.

A notice from MA Elder Affairs informed us that home-based health care workers, certified or non-certified, working face-to-face, have been added to Phase 1. This includes council on aging, SHINE, and nutrition workers, including Meals-on-Wheels delivery. Vaccinations will be available in February but details are not set yet.

Helpful phone numbers: Berkshire County vaccine information hotline at 413-449-5575, and Veterans Central Western MA Healthcare System in Northampton at (413) 584-4040.

Tax Assistance

Free AARP Tax Assistance for middle, low-income people, particularly age sixty and older, will start January 25 through Claire Teague Senior Center, Great Barrington. Volunteers are trained by the IRS. AARP membership is not needed. Call 528-1881 for an appointment. Form 1361C and a document checklist can be picked up or mailed to you. There will be an initial and then a final appointment.

—Kyle Pierce and Kay Purcell
Council on Aging

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Library Notes

We are still here and open for limited browsing. We also have computers and iPads to use for internet access for those in need. One of the services we have is the ability to print and scan. We recently set up wireless capability with our machine. You will need to install the Canon Print Business app on your phone or tablet. Printing is very easy once your device has discovered the actual printer that we have, or simply scanned the QR code. Scanning of documents and licenses can be done wirelessly from our machine to your device, but will require a little assistance. We've been helping patrons print all along, but now it is not only easier for everyone, but the scanning feature can be very helpful.

One way in which you might use this is to help get a vaccination appointment. We're not sure how it will work out as time goes on, but at this point it seems the vaccination locations are requiring appointments and paperwork filled out in advance online. Scanning insurance cards, filling out forms, can be daunting if you haven't done it before. Come by when we are open and we can help. We aren't experts on all devices or technologies, but we will give it our best try, and get you to where you need to be.

—Mark Makuc
Library Director
MontereyMassLibrary.org

Transfer Station

Electronics and Small Appliances

As noted in an issue during the fall, some people have been leaving electronic devices and small appliances by the Swap Shop, either with good intentions, or to avoid having to pay for disposal. But these kinds of items do cost money to dispose of, and we have a fee schedule. It's worth remembering that the true cost of owning things is the "life cycle" cost, from purchasing, to using and maintaining, to disposal. When an individual decides to purchase something, they are also assuming the cost of getting rid of it when its life cycle is over.

Some electronic items, including computers, monitors, laptops, printers, and keyboards, may be disposed of with no cost at Staples. To dispose of these items at the transfer station, which goes into a separate electronics waste stream, costs $20 per item.

Old VCRs and audio equipment cost $15 per item.

Air conditioners and dehumidifiers also cost $20 because they have to have the refrigerant removed as part of disposal.

Microwave ovens cost $10.

We can take sofas and love seats for $25, overstuffed chairs for $20.

There are other things that we charge for but the items above are the most often questioned or left without asking. Last time we had the electronics bin hauled off, I understand it cost the town $1,200.

Feel free to ask questions about all of this anytime. Keep warm and safe!

—Beth Parks and Dave Gilmore

Monterey Community Center

To brighten up our winter days, Karen Shreefter will share her wealth of knowledge about flower garden design this month. She will be answering all of your questions on Saturday, February 20, at 11 a.m., via Zoom. Be sure to send us your questions ahead of time to make sure that they are answered.

Save the date of Friday, March 19, at 7 p.m., to join us for concert clips from Aston Magna. Aston Magna Music Festival is a Great Barrington-based organization that features classical and early music concerts. One of the selections will be a violin duo by LeClair. Be ready to enjoy an hour of music and discussion via Zoom.

Connie Wilson's chair yoga class meets at 10 a.m. on Tuesdays via Zoom. Let us know if you want to join the class, and we will happily send you the link.

Thanks to Elizabeth Maschmeyer for teaching "Food Preservation/Dehydration" in January. We are already looking forward to her next offering. She has graciously offered to teach a class each season.

We have had requests for a class on genealogy research. Do we have any experts out there who could teach this via Zoom?

To register for any of the above events, please call the MCC at (413) 528-3600 and leave a message, or email calendar@ccmonterey.org at least twenty-four hours ahead to register for receiving the Zoom link.

—Mary Makuc
MCC Coordinator

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MCC Volunteer Spotlight
Interview with JoAnn Bell

JoAnn has been an active member on the MCC town committee for three years. Having spent her last thirty-four Christmases in Monterey, she shares her love for all things winter. Not only has she helped bring her sense of joy and magic to the Monterey Lights the Holidays, she gladly greets folks with a smile at the Monterey Pantry Pickup even when it's really cold and snowy.

Mary Makuc: JoAnn, can you tell us where you are from and how you landed in Monterey?

JoAnn Bell: I was born in Canada in the 1940s and came to New York in the late 70s to join Doug McTavish, my husband, in New York City. I came to Massachusetts to join my friends, the Cranes, who also loved skiing, and who lived on Hupi Circle. Monterey has always held a special significance for our two families. We came in the late 80s after giving birth to our son Charlie, and have been here for thirty-four years.

MM: How did you get involved in volunteering in the community?

JB: I got involved with the Board of Gould Farm because I am passionate about mental health and community. Then later I started volunteering with the Bidwell House, which is right on my road.

I was drawn to the Monterey Community Center for my own enjoyment a few years ago, and was really glad to be involved.

MM: What led you in particular to the MCC?

Mary Makuc

JB: Joe Baker and Bonner McAllester were so friendly to me over the decades. Our kids were friendly during the summers. Joe fixed my son's violin. Eventually, I got a shared garden plot with my friend Kathryn in the community garden and was excited to try my hand at it.

MM: What programs or facets of the community center have you enjoyed?

JB: Besides the garden, I really enjoyed Connie's yoga class and Tai Chi. I was also really excited about the Monterey Lights the Holidays project. And I loved the Cookbook Club. The American Chestnut Foundation Talk and Roast felt very organic. It felt homey and warm to be talking about the chestnut tree that Mark Makuc planted years ago and then being able to eat the roasted chestnuts. (This program happened this fall.)

I also enjoyed the programs with Tom Ryan including measuring the big trees.

I like how the MCC reaches out to other organizations in the community and we work together. I was glad that during Covid some community center volunteers, and council on aging volunteers (and others) got the food pantry going.

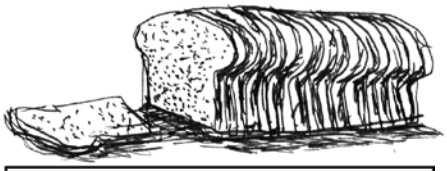
MM: What have you enjoyed about being on the MCC town committee?

JB: I like how we think up programs and can try programs and see if they work.

Our interview was done over the phone but I knew there was a twinkle in her eye, when she said "We should have a party to determine who is the oldest person in Monterey that can still make a snow angel!" Socially distanced of course.

Many thanks to JoAnn for her hours of enthusiastic volunteer work for the Monterey Community Center, and may we celebrate many more holidays and gatherings with her in Monterey. We are looking forward to the fun that JoAnne cooks up.

—Mary Makuc



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Knox Gallery

Serial Attraction

Another first hand look at the artist's process is on view at the Knox. Joe Baker's *Serial Attraction* provides a glimpse of his development process and finished work, which often features ongoing studies of specific settings.

On view since January 19, 2021, *Serial Attraction* focuses, as the title implies, on the artist's practice of working in series. Following the concept of our two most recent exhibits (Anne Getsinger's *Trace Your Hand*, and Julie Shapiro's *Call and Response*), *Serial Attraction* includes Baker's sketches, color and composition studies, experimental efforts, and many personal comments, along with his work in pastels and oils.

I am reluctant to attempt to summarize Baker's process and mission statements, as he is quite articulate himself. His exhibition features beautiful written statements about the settings that compel him, and his experiences while exploring his subjects. He describes the ever-present influence of trees in the minds of New Englanders—their angles, shapes, colors—and the energy they exude. His illustrated locales range from New Mexico, to the Adirondacks, to Florida, and of course to our Berkshires. He has stories to tell about his experiences, and about the development of his work. He tells them well.

Please visit *Serial Attraction*. Baker's work and his stories are equally worthy of your time and attention. We are fortunate to have generous and creative members of our community. Let's celebrate them in this difficult time!

All Knox Gallery events are admission free. Exhibits can be viewed during library hours (see back page of this issue). Please visit the library website for current Covid restrictions such as admission scheduling. Knox Gallery, Monterey Library, 452 Main Road, Monterey, MA, 528-3795; MontereyMassLibrary.org/Knox-Gallery; facebook.com/KnoxGallery.

—MaryPaul Yates

To Our Valuable Customers

Due to health, safety, and staffing concerns, the Roadside Café will remained closed until the end of February, to ensure that our community stays safe during this period of increased risk.

We hope that everyone is staying safe and well, and we so appreciate your business and support. In the meantime, we wish you and yours a peaceful and healthy winter and look forward to serving you when we reopen.

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the bad-good year

how can one ascribe a positive adjective to a year in which one american now dies every minute from Covid-19?

and yet... the year has forced each one of us to consider how to make the most of a bizarre and difficult situation.

"BC," my personal code referencing life Before Covid, saw me walking and shopping and museuming my way through the neighborhoods of manhattan. weekends were quieter but equally fulfilling, perusing the stalls at farmers' markets and enjoying year-round theater productions in glorious berkshire county.

and then the world came to a standstill.

everyone, it is said, was in the same storm, but not everyone in the same boat.

our boat allowed us choices, and we chose to spend the duration of the pandemic in the beauty of western massachusetts.

but it painfully brought into focus the strife and hardship of friends and neighbors and countless unknown others.

montereyans sprung into action by establishing a food pantry. neighbors called each other to say they were venturing to market, could they pick up some items for you? —fostering neighbors into friends

perhaps the most surprising change came not from the distance that might have developed from not being able to see one's family, but from the closeness which resulted from the daily concern about each other's health and welfare.

friendships became more precious, phone calls more intimate, concerns for each other more profound.

a new government has just begun with its welcome promise of unity and repair.

so maybe it is possible to use a positive adjective to address a year of upheaval and fear and worry.

perhaps 'thoughtful' or 'concerned' or 'illuminating' can be offered in contrast.

hopefully in not very long, we will not have to guess who the person behind the mask is, and we will once again engage in the previously undervalued greeting of a hug.

—Myrna Rosen

A Kind Gesture

A neighbor being neighborly
Introducing himself
An outdoor conversation
Acknowledgement that in this community
We help each other
Is enough to make me feel good
For days

December 6, 2020

Living the Natural Life

We have all re-evaluated our lives
We've had to determine what is important
And what is not
Not important is make-up
Manicures and pedicures
Fancy clothes
Dinner at restaurants
What is important
Is getting enough sleep and exercise
Good food
Friends
Neighbors
Family
Staying in touch
By whatever means possible
Making time for each

December 13, 2020

—Stephanie Sloane

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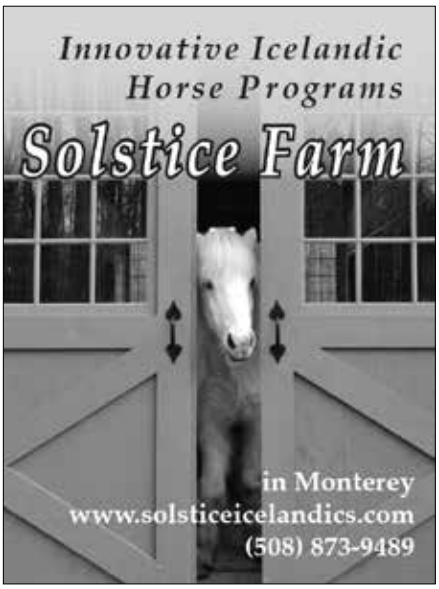

Letters
The Words We Use

Last winter, I wrote in the *Monterey News* about a Bidwell House lecture by historian James Merrell. He stressed the way in which many commonly and casually used words and expressions—settlers, hinterlands, the "discovery" of America—misrepresent the complexity of our history. They flatten our understanding of people who had settled and managed and governed this vast country for millennia before the colonists arrived. And before the Mahicans and the Algonquins and the Plains Indians and other First Nations were deprived of their own lands in spite of many forms of resistance, from negotiated agreements and broken treaties to legal battles and violence.

Richard Skolnick's generally inspiring article, *'Can Do' Nation*, offers a number of examples of the spirit invoked in the title: from the building of the Transcontinental Railroad and the Panama Canal to the rapid development of the Covid-19 vaccine (Hallelujah!).

But I was taken aback by a phrase used in describing one of the many challenges of building the railroad: "predictably hostile Indians." It seemed to me that it could have easily been changed to something like "displaced and understandably hostile Indigenous Peoples." I know there is ongoing controversy about how best to refer to the American native populations: Some don't mind the term Indian. But paired with the adjectives used, the phrase seemed to minimize the depth of their righteous grievances and to privilege the point of view of the railroad builders.

This might seem like a petty quibble about political correctness. But since our country's legacy of slavery and genocide is now bearing very poisonous fruit, I think it's important to watch our language. Careful consideration of one's choice of words, and the biases they hold, is not just a matter of political correctness, as James Merrell said in his talk. It is inherently political.

—Janet Jensen

Letters
Thanks to Sergeant Fahey

A big "thank you" to both Officer Brian Fahey and the Monterey Police for aiding my family when our car decided to stop working on the night of January 15. A kindly neighbor alerted the police, and Officer Fahey was prompt, courteous, and very helpful with redirecting traffic, jump starting my car, sharing his automotive knowledge, and following us home to make sure we were safe. These are the times when you are truly grateful you live in a small town.

Thank you!

—Tina Soule
126 Beartown Mountain Road

Notice of Passing
Jan Emmons

The news of Jan Emmon's death in late January saddens those of us who were lucky enough to know her and George while they lived on Main Road on the east side of Monterey. She is survived by George, who lives along the shore of Buzzards Bay, just west of Cape Cod, and by their children and grandchildren.

Jan and I were both members of The Monterey Piecemakers, the quilting group Barbara Tryon hosted for the best part of twenty years. We made a quilt based on the Monterey Town Seal to honor Monterey's Sequicentennial Celebration in 1997. The creative skills Jan used in that adventure included creating the patterns for the jaunty silhouettes that march around that quilt. (It's still hanging in town hall. Once we're able to move freely in and out of public buildings again, take a look at how her lively figures add her special zest to the piece.)

Jan excelled as a hostess and we were treated to memorable summer afternoon picnics at the Emmons' home. Delicious food and drink, warm laughter, and great conversation remain with me as hallmarks of those times. Along with her dedication to The Bidwell House, they remain part of Jan's Monterey legacy.

—Mary Kate Jordan

Editor's Note: A full remembrance of Jan should be available for the March issue.

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A "Red Junglefowl" alongside the road up by the swimming hole on the Wallace Hall Road on New Year's Day. —Wendy Jensen

February Foxes

Folks let me know about the wildlife they see, also about tracks. Just now I am hearing about foxes. In the middle of December Steve Moore told me about two foxes at the west end of his and Wendy's field. He didn't see them at that time, but heard them, making quite a racket. He told me that this was right near a place where there had been a fox den during the past summer.

About a month after that, Wendy gave me a great description of a pair of foxes she and Steve had seen while out on a walk. She described their lush coats and tails so well I felt I could see them myself. She wondered if this were a mated pair, or a courting pair, and if this were typical for the middle of January. We both thought it might be a little early. I had been thinking the snow fleas (springtails) were early this year. And maybe the bluebirds. I think some of us puzzle over this every year, about the return of the robins, too.

To answer Red Fox questions, I go to Leonard Lee Rue III's amazing book, *The Life of the Red Fox*, J.B. Lippincott Company, NY, 1969. Here is what I found in Rue's book.

I will be writing about Red Foxes not Grey Foxes here. Four years back I wrote a comparison about the two, which are completely different species and do not interbreed. The red ones were introduced here by the colonial English, looking for a familiar quarry, for their fox hunting on horseback. They wanted a fox easy to spot as it ran across open fields. The native fox here was the Grey Fox, not at all given to running across open fields, more to disappearing into the woods or even up a tree.

The foxes (red) are at their lowest population point in winter, but by late November they go through physical changes, getting ready to increase their numbers. The males' testicles become enlarged and produce live sperm. From this time until late April, the male can breed, but the only outward change in him is that he is looking for a mate. The female comes into heat in January or early February. Even the newly matured pups of the past year are ready to reproduce, at ten months old.

Foxes have a sharp bark and can be heard any time, but folks hear it much more often in the winter. They give two or three

Bonner McAllester and Joan Kleban.

yaps and then a tapering off at the end. Sometimes they give a real blood-curdling (says Rue) shriek, especially the females. During this time, and all year round, both the males and the females use scent posts. They may be clumps of grass or snow, or rocks, or old bones. Here they may urinate or defecate, for communication purposes. If defecating is the medium with the message, foxes often put it in the middle of a path. I knew a man who left a short piece of a flat board in the middle of the path. Before long he would find a regular solid-matter message there from a fox. He would toss it off, replace the board, and then always find another the next time he came by.

We biologists love to count things. Some have followed the tracks of a fox in a snowy field and found he refreshed his urine scent posts forty or fifty times in one night. Rue reminds his readers that you can tell a male messenger from a female one by looking closely at the tracks. She will squat, he will stand and raise a leg, like our pet dogs.

Usually a fox pairs with his or her mate from the last season. But if one has died, the other looks for a new mate. Sometimes two males will compete for the same female and will fight. They use their tails while fighting, circling each other. The one with the longer tail has a clear advantage and can flick his tail in the other's face, then bite while his adversary can't see. One fox will also hit the other with his rump, to knock him off his feet. They may rear up on their hind legs, putting their forepaws on each other's chests, pushing while slashing with their teeth. They growl, and hiss, and squall. The loser runs off fast, pursued only a short distance.

Is this a love story? Of course. This is February, valentine month for everyone, and spring is coming. The male and female are inseparable, cooperate in hunting, in choosing a den, and then perfecting it. They mate in the middle of the fourteen-day period when the female is in heat, and fifty-one days later, in the middle of March, six or seven pups are born. They are very dark, lead-colored, with eyes closed the first week or so. The male does the hunting in these early days, and the female watches for his return. Rue describes the welcome she gives him.

"The female always saw the male coming before I did, but I instantly knew of his approach because the female's body would become taut and she would shiver in anticipation. As the male drew near, the female bounded out to greet him, uttering a loud, high-pitched wail. When she got close to him, she would flop down on her belly, raise her tail up over her back, and wave it furiously. From the prone position she would spring up and kiss the male all over with her tongue, and the male would reciprocate. The male would then pick up whatever food he had dropped during this exchange and the pair would trot back to the den and the pups."

— Bonner McAllester

Under the Spell of Undset:
A Month in Medieval Norway

T'was nigh onto All Saints Day, and I was irked by hearing aught else than political tidings from matins until midnight. I would fain embark on some other pastime: a reading of tales from long ago and far away.

A few hundred pages into Sigrid Undset's 1920s trilogy, *Kristin Lavransdatter*, set in the fourteenth century Norway, I was so immersed in the tale that I found myself thinking and sometimes speaking in the archaic English that marks the dialog of its large cast of characters. Their multiple names and complex lineages are not easy to track. Nevertheless, the experience was less like reading a book than embarking on an adventure to Scandinavia in the Middle Ages. It brought forth the richness of another time, filtered through the consciousness of a complex woman facing many struggles as well as deep joys and heartbreak.

I started the 1,100-plus-page trilogy seven months into the pandemic, in the midst of pre-election jitters. At the time, I could concentrate on little but my Twitter feed, which only served to exacerbate my anxiety.I couldn't quite settle on anything that captured my attention. Contemporary fiction seemed frivolous. The velocity of current events rendered much nonfiction irrelevant. Even the *New Yorke*r felt stale. Finally I hit on the idea of checking out the epic story that had been on my list for years. The read proved to be deeply satisfying, taking me through all of November and returning me to a guilty pleasure I had almost forgotten: reading for hours on end, even during the day.

The trilogy, by 1928 Nobel Prize Laureate Sigrid Undset, follows the life and loves of Kristin, a lovely and somewhat headstrong woman, from age seven through her death at around fifty of the Bubonic plague, which swept through Norway around 1349. Undset was only the third woman to win the award in literature "principally for her powerful descriptions of Northern life during the Middle Ages," according to the Nobel Prize website. The details she provides of that period run from the colors and artistry of clothes and arms to meals, crops, rituals, herbs, technologies, transport, and the ways they cared for one another. Somehow these details do not get in the way of Undset's fluid narrative, but enrich it.

I first encountered the author gazing out solemnly from a portrait on the wall of the Monterey Library. I learned she considered this area to be one of the most beautiful spots in the world and had been a regular summer visitor to town. During the summers of 1941-1943, she stayed at the Brookbend Inn, in the very same building—who knows, maybe the same rooms — where I now reside.

Undset, a fervent anti-fascist whose novels were burned in Germany, fled Norway in 1940, after the Nazi invasion of her country. She and her son travelled across Russia on the Siberian Express and by boat to Japan then across the Pacific, arriving in San Francisco in August of that year. During her four-and-a-half years in the United States, she travelled, lectured and wrote vigorously to try to convince Americans to join the fight against Hitler, which had already claimed her eldest son. She wanted America to wake up to what was going on. "The most important issue today is to save the surviving Jews in Europe," she wrote to a friend, "as much as it is still possible to save them." She was also on the executive board of the Emergency Committee to Save the Jews and spoke and wrote extensively on the subject, pretty much giving up on her fiction. "Who can write novels at such a time?" she asked in a letter to a friend. I feel honored to live in the same space where she took refuge from the heat of three Brooklyn summers.

I learned a little more about Undset through a special archive at the Monterey

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Library. It features mostly articles by or about her that were published in the bulletin of St. Ansgar's Scandinavian Catholic League of New York and carefully collated by Viggo Rambusch of Tyringham. His father, another celebrated Scandinavian Catholic (not a large group), who was called the "dean of American Church Architects," befriended Undset, whom his son met on occasion. There's also a copy of an article from the *Berkshire Eagle* (April 8, 2000) that references Undset's speech to the Monterey Co-operative fundraiser at the Congregational Church to benefit the American Friends of Norway, accompanied by violinist Helen Teschner Tas and Celius Dougherty on the piano. Mr. Rambusch feels certain that Undset must have also been a regular at the now-gone teahouse, as Scandinavians are notoriously fond of tea or coffee in the afternoon.

Undset wrote Kristin Lavransdatter in her thirties, after the breakup of her marriage and while raising three small children, one of whom had profound disabilities. One wonders how a young woman who had to drop out of school for financial reasons managed to bring so many personalities, landscapes, and eras into focus. As the story goes, after the children went to bed she drank coffee and smoked cigarettes while she wove her tales. She also was seeped in Scandinavian history: her father had written his 1881 doctoral thesis on "The Beginnings of the Iron Age in Northern Europe." After he was appointed to lead the Museum of Antiquities in Kristiania, Sigrid, as a young girl, was allowed to run through the galleries and examine axes and farm implements, rings and amulets and necklaces of gold and silver from the olden times. Later she translated several Icelandic sagas into Modern Norwegian, studied Old Norse manuscripts and medieval chronicles, visited and examined medieval churches and monasteries, and researched the lives of a number of saints, which sparked her interest in Catholicism. Once, when asked how she was able to write so realistically about the Middle Ages, she replied, "One can only write properly about the era in which one lives."

Years ago, a friend who knew of my interest in Undset, brought over a video version of book one, *The Wreath*. It was past ten and we were tired when we started watching, but for three hours we were pretty much on the edge of our seats, spellbound by the black and white subtitled movie directed by Liv Ullman. It serves as a compelling introduction to the more extensive tale recounted in the trilogy. The plot really takes off when Kristin, the beloved daughter of Lavrans, a prominent farmer (modeled after Undset's father), falls for a handsome and courageous but wayward knight. The illicit start to their long relationship brings with it shame and ramifications that haunt Kristin throughout her married life and the birth of eight boys.

For several decades, Kristin remains devoted to her children, and increasingly to her Catholic faith. She is also clear-eyed about the price she paid for following her heart. In the last book, after enduring the death of two children and her husband shortly after their reconciliation, she makes a pilgrimage to St. Olav's Cathedral and enters a convent. In her final years, with a wider perspective, she claims both her joys and sorrows as part of the woof and weft of the larger fabric of her life: "And yet she had loved [her life] so, rejoicing over it, with both the bad and the good, so that there was not a single day she would have given back to God without lament or a single sorrow she would have relinquished without regret."

A Norse saga of this length may seem a bit intimidating, but I'm not the only one who loved the ride. *Kristin Lavransdatter* enjoyed something of a renaissance following the 2006 translation (which I regrettably did not discover until I was more than halfway through). The new version dispenses with the archaic English for more readable prose. Reviewers have compared the trilogy to Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* and to Elena Ferrante's best-selling Neapolitan Novels. Undset and Ferrante both generate narrative power through the accretion of details about everyday events against a backdrop of historic and political tides and filtered through the lens of a flawed heroines. Both have elements of soap opera: passion, betrayal, scandal, rape, murder, adultery, tragedy. In Undset, however, the narrative is undergirded with a layer of faith, devotion, surrender and, ultimately, grace.

For Stephen McAllister and his kids, the trilogy provided bedtime reading for months when they were high schoolers. Steve, who had first read the book in Norway in Norwegian, would read for a half hour or more until one or more of the children nodded off, he said. The listeners, says their mother Rosemary, were also treated by their father to *Gulliver's Travels* (unabridged), Shakespeare, and more great works read aloud by their father. All wound up being "literature nerds," she added.

As I was researching this column, I discovered a website, "Gal's Guide" (galsguide.org), which describes itself as "an independent women's history library" that posts another audio chapter of the trilogy each "Friggs Friday." I plan to check it out further when I feel like revisiting medieval Norway.

There's also *The Master of Hestviken*, a four-volume series that Undset wrote after her trilogy, and which she considered her real masterpiece. I can think of worse ways to ride out the pandemic.

—Janet Jensen

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Bidwell Winter Lecture Series
Final Talk in February

Thank you to all of our friends who attended the museum's January 13 Zoom talk, "Finding A Place Again: Honoring the Mohican Story of Stockbridge," with Bonney Hartley. We had a record turn out for this outstanding program, close to eighty people!

The last lecture in our winter series is coming up on Wednesday, February 24, at 7 p.m., via Zoom, and is titled "Cultivating Memorial Geographies and Collective Memories," with speaker Rose Miron. In this talk Ms. Miron will discuss the heritage tourism trips organized by the Stockbridge-Munsee tribe's historical committee in the late twentieth century, which brought busloads of tribal citizens back to the Northeast to learn about Mohican history. The trips allowed tribal citizens to recreate the geographies in which their ancestors lived, and cultivate new collective memories that strengthened a shared sense of tribal history, laying the foundation for future interventions in regional museums and other public history sites. Rose Miron is the director of the D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies at the Newberry Library in Chicago. She holds a BA in history with a minor in Spanish and a PhD in American studies from the University of Minnesota. Her research explores Indigenous interventions in public history within the Northeast and the Great Lakes regions, as well as American Indian sovereignty and activism in the twentieth century.

Steve Gilbert

The lecture will be held via Zoom. Registration is required and can be done on the museum website, bidwellhousemuseum.org, under "Events." The Zoom details for the event will be sent via email a few days in advance.

In December the museum's annual appeal mailing went out to all members and donors. If you did not receive a letter but you are interested in making a donation, please call the museum at (413) 528-6888, or head to the museum's website, bidwellhousemuseum.org/donate. Every dollar donated supports the preservation of the historic 1760s homestead, 192-acre grounds, and history education programs. And don't forget the grounds of the Bidwell House Museum are open right now, every day, dawn until dusk! Hike the trails, take a leisurely walk, or go snowshoeing on a snowy afternoon.

—Heather Kowalski
Executive Director

Red Eft

In the rain-damp leaf litter I see one and stop.
Then two, then three—an amphibian triangle.
No water here but the rain.

When I bend down, recalibrate to their scale,
I see what they see—twigs are logs. Leaves quiver
under the blow of raindrops. Vast forests

between them. They wriggle their orange bodies slow.
Sometimes they freeze for half a minute,
as if gathering strength to cast themselves over

the next hurdle, perhaps like the time they first
heaved out of water, aqueous refugees doomed
to creep the earth like some punishment out of myth,

until something says return and they know it's time.
Does each know the other two are there?
Are they sending messages through their speckled

skin, vibrations through their tiny clawless feet?
The forest floor trembles with their small shuffling.
They're on track to intersect and I root for them,

I want to see what they will do with each other.
I try on their primitive throbbing brains, their earth-dry
skins, lonely salamander lives. It's a near miss, whole inches

apart. When I stand up again, trees return,
and sky and rain, everything
moving too fast. All the way back

I step carefully, staring at the darkened ground,
solicitous, as if I were at home here, as if
I were any less easily crushed underfoot.

—Kateri Kosek
(published in Blueline 2020)

The Ice Storm

A freezing rain has glazed the snow
and littered it with shards of trees.
The limbs that haven't snapped hang low,
barely lifting in the breeze.
Our neighbor and his nine-year-old
go by in boots and neither speaks.
The sun must have gotten cold
to paint that orange on their cheeks

Sitting in this living room
with music and a good fire,
the whispering of my wife's broom
on the kitchen floor, the thumping dryer
in the cellar, and our daughter dressing dolls,
I watch the flames until I see
the windows darken a degree,
and icicles run down these walls

—Don Barkin

Pancake ice on Rawson Brook —*Wendy Jensen*

Pandemic Blues

My mind has gone numb,
My body as well....
And when it will end
There is no way to tell.

I feel I'm in prison
With no place to go.
And when it will end
There is no way to know.

So I'll take a deep breath
And get into the day,
For when it will end
I now really can't say.

—Judy Hayes, 2021

A Life on Skates, Part I

From the Garden to Garfield

We were the Mohicans. Five hockey-obsessed Brooklyn kids in our early teens: Gerry Bernstein, Paulie Baratta, Sy Solomon, Allan Eisenberg, and me. Now, seventy years later, on our freshly-shoveled Lake Garfield rink, I'm here to tell the tale.

In the early 50s, few boys were playing roller hockey. Fewer still, ice hockey. Brooklyn streets were okay for touch football and punchball. But hockey? You really had to love skating and hockey to play on the street, what with car traffic interrupting play and parked cars cramping the space. Admittedly, there were fewer cars then, but what spaces there were at the curbs were usually piled with leaves.

Naturally, we were all NY Ranger fans. There were just six teams in the NHL then and the Rangers the sole franchise in the area. With forty cents and a high school "G.O." card, you could see the Rangers in action at Madison Square Garden. Our seats were in the nosebleed section, a vantage point from which a piece of the rink directly below us wasn't visible unless you were willing to stand with one foot on your seat and the other on the guard rail in front of you, which we gladly did.

Lin Saberski

Bob taking a corner, dreaming he's back on the Garden ice.

We played every day we could before snow covered 39th Street, the block where most of us lived. Eager to get on skates as soon as possible, we pushed the hockey season a bit. Clamping on our Union Hardware roller skates in late August, we hit the street only to find our skates digging into the asphalt. Union Hardware wheels wore thin pretty quickly, "boxing" the wheels. The coming of solid steel Chicago wheels made for faster skating. Instead of having to clamp our skates on each time we played, we realized that by taping skates to a pair of shoes, not only did this secure them better but it added precious time to our play.

The Mohicans sometimes played against teams from other neighborhoods on their blocks, or occasionally in parks near them. A city park is not to be confused with anything grassy and pastoral. These were fenced-in concrete spaces sporting handball and basketball courts, and the usual array of swings, monkey bars, seesaws, and the like. But when we had a chance to play in an open area without cars to worry about, that felt more like real hockey.

At the same time I was playing roller hockey, I had begun to ice skate. An aunt and uncle, avid skaters, took my older brother Morty and me to the Brooklyn Ice Palace, an indoor rink that had skating sessions every Friday night. I vividly recall how anxious I was that first night, fearing the ultimate embarrassment of falling, convinced all eyes would be witnessing it.

But my roller skating "chops" helped me. Morty and I started going to the Ice Palace every Friday night. After a few months we convinced Sy to join us. He too was an ice novice, but my fast left wing on the Mohicans. He took to the ice quickly. Morty liked to skate close to the boards, dodging skaters getting on or off the rink. But Sy and I would race around, darting in and out of the crowd, frequently getting whistled down by the two guards stopping skaters deemed dangerous. This happened so often that they came to know and befriend us. Often, they'd let us stay after the session to help clean the rink.

The last half hour of the public session, you had to skate in the opposite direction. This reduced the number of skaters substantially; a godsend for us. We could then go faster, practice turning in the opposite direction and making sudden "hockey stops," both skills we would shortly need.

One night at the Ice Palace we saw a poster advertising tryouts for a Pee Wee

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Hockey League open to boys fourteen to sixteen, sponsored by Madison Square Garden. "The World's Most Famous Arena."

Tryouts were to be held at the Garden on a Sunday morning two weeks hence. Both Sy and I were fourteen, neither having any experience playing on ice. How many kids would show up? Would some of them, suburban kids probably, have played ice hockey? We had no idea. But there was no way we'd pass up a chance to skate in "the most famous sports arena in the world."

At the time, the Garden was in Manhattan at 49th Street and 8th Avenue, sharing the same block with the famous Toots Shor restaurant. On the Sunday morning of the tryouts, we and about sixty or seventy others were herded around the corner to 48th Street and told to wait for the doors to open. At 5' 6", I was clearly one of the shortest ones there. A number of the boys looked older than the sixteen-year limit. We were both really nervous and had no idea what the tryouts would entail.

Finally, the doors were opened. Walking into the dimly-lit, chilly arena, the whiteness of the ice accentuated by sixteen thousand empty seats, I felt awed and small. Hurriedly lacing up our skates, we waited for instructions from the three or four men at center ice. We were told to skate around the rink, stop at the whistle, and reverse direction. As soon as I hit the ice, I felt it to be harder and faster than at the Ice Palace. At the first whistle, my newly sharpened blades caught the ice, and I fell. Fortunately, I was not alone.

The tryout continued for over an hour; a combination of sprints, abrupt stops, reverse direction, skating backwards, stopping, and sprint forwards. My thighs were on fire, but I was skating confidently and having a blast. At the end of the tryout, they chose about fifty kids, enough for four teams: the Rangers, Rovers, Raiders, and Ramblers. Both of us made the cut—Sy with the Rovers, I with the Rangers.

Our first practice was the following Sunday. My equipment consisted of skates and a stick. I was chosen to center the Ranger's first line. Two teams, twelve boys, Madison Square Garden! There I was at center ice, about to face off.

Lin Saberski

Bob and Steve Pontell, manual Zamboni crew

Before dropping the puck, the referee, wearing hockey gloves, offered to lend them to me. I declined, saying they'd probably be too big for me. Returning to the bench after the first shift, a teammate said, "Do you know who that was offering you his gloves? That was Don Raleigh." "Bones" Raleigh was one of my favorite Rangers, a center, as was my hero, Buddy O'Connor.

Pee Wee hockey lasted just one year. But what a year it was. Weekly practices and twice monthly games on Sunday mornings, played for modest crowds before Ranger farm team games. The experience was the thrill of a lifetime.

A close second—watching the Rangers finally win another Stanley Cup in 1994. "Now I can die in peace," read the sign held aloft that resonated with every long-suffering Ranger fan.

The last time I skated on Garden ice was in January 1954. The *NY Daily News* sponsored an event each year called Silver Skates, a racing competition open to novice and experienced skaters. I had just turned seventeen, and was a freshman at Brooklyn College. My hockey playing at the Garden had ended almost two years before, and Friday nights at the Ice Palace had become an occasional outing. But once again, it was a poster there that put me back on Garden ice. It advertised that qualifying trials for Silver Skates were to be held at the Ice Palace two Fridays hence. Figuring I had nothing to lose, I raced in the prelims and qualified.

Unlike the empty Garden I'd skated in before, the arena was packed for the Silver Skates. I was no less nervous as my event, boys intermediate novice, was announced. Of the sixty-four competitors in the eight events, I was the only one wearing hockey skates, whose short curved blades are designed for quick stops and tight turns, not the long pulls that flat racing blades afforded. But my skates gave me the advantage of a quick start.

The gun went off, and I quickly took the lead. Hugging tight to the pylons marking the turns, I kept the lead for seven-and-a-half of the eight-lap, half-mile race. Philip Keller, Packenac Lake, NJ, blew by me and won, going away. Still, a second place medal, an engraved pair of racing blades and priceless memories of my times on Garden ice are with me… treasured forever.

Had these experiences been my only ones on skates, memorable as they are, they still wouldn't qualify as "a life on skates." For that, there's part two.

—Bob Cutick

Contributions
January 2021

Monterey News contributors are the reason we can keep publishing, whether you enjoy the print version for free pickup in town, have it mailed to you wherever you live, or like to read "the paper" as a pdf in your email.

Somehow, year after year, the *News* receives about the same level of contributions, but always from a different mix of individuals. We do have some rising costs, and an expanding list of readers, so we're keeping our fingers crossed that the financial support we receive from loyal Montereyans keeps pace.

Thanks to everyone who helps, and particular thanks to this month's contributors:

Dan Zweig & Sally Petrick
David & Nicki Silberman
Greg Carnese
Gary & Colta Ives
Louise Amstead
Michael Logan
Nancy Anderson

Bread of Affliction

Bread of affliction,
Bone dry.
Bread of affliction,
Desert without end.
Bread of affliction,
The sun will not yield.
Bread of affliction
With hope, I try.

—Sam Estreicher,
January 1, 2021

My Dad was happiest when he was with my Mom. On his eightieth birthday we took a family trip to Tuscany. He couldn't have been happier on that trip.

Remembrance
Paul Gelbard, 90

Paul Ernest Gelbard passed away in his home on November 10 of complications from dementia.

Paul was born and raised in the Bronx, NY. He attended CCNY at age sixteen and graduated Phi Beta Kappa. He went on to earn his law degree with honors from Columbia University Law School and later earned a masters in law from New York University Law School.

After serving in the US Army during the Korean War, one of his friends set him up on a blind date with Estelle Poritzky. He claimed he knew he was going to marry her after the first date. They were engaged after six weeks and married after six months. They were partners in absolutely everything, never wanting to do anything without the other. It was a true love story for sixty-four years until it ended with Estelle's passing in January 2020.

Paul practiced corporate law in New York City for sixty years, a profession he truly enjoyed, and retired at the young age of eighty-five.

Paul was the definition of a Renaissance man. He spoke five languages and was a poetry buff. He loved classical music and also adored James Taylor, and heard both countless times at Tanglewood, one of his most favorite places. He also loved the opera, ballet, and museums—especially the Metropolitan Opera House and the Clark Museum.

Paul was also very athletic, from playing football through high school, to racquetball, to his favorite sport, tennis, which he played until he was eighty-five. He enjoyed cross country skiing and hiking in Beartown State Forest, as well as walking while holding hands with Estelle—an image that immediately comes to mind to anyone who knew them.

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Estelle and Paul, "rower" and "rowee."

Paul's defining characteristic was his humor, just like his father. He was especially known for puns, quick wit, and joke telling. He injected humor and levity in all aspects of his life and all those he touched.

Paul and Estelle started their lives together in Yonkers, NY, and then moved to White Plains, NY, but their favorite place was their home in Monterey. Estelle, who was from Hudson, NY, introduced Paul to the Berkshires in 1956. In the late 1960s, they rented a house on Lake Buel for two summers. They fell in love with Monterey and bought a house on Lake Garfield in 1969.

Family brought Paul the most joy and nothing made him happier than when he was surrounded by the entire family at the lake. He and Estelle spent as much time as possible there for fifty years. Paul loved to sail, speed around in his motorboat, be rowed by Estelle, and in his younger years, waterski.

Traveling was also something Paul really enjoyed, and he and Estelle went to Europe many times. But his absolute favorite trips were the large Gelbard family vacations—with the pinnacle being Paul's eightieth birthday trip to Tuscany.

Jewish observance, culture, and tradition were extremely important to Paul. He was an active member in his synagogue and gave his time and support to many Jewish causes.

Paul is survived by twin brother Jack and brother Bernie, children Arlen (and Jane) Gelbard, Randy (and Adrian) Gelbard, and Lisa (and Keith) LePack; grandchildren Andrew (and Heather) Gelbard, Lauren (and Josh) Braunstein, Daniel Gelbard, Cara Gelbard, and great granddaughter Callie Braunstein.

—Lisa Gelbard LePack

Remembrance
Laurily Epstein

Laurily Epstein, an Iowa native, died peacefully of natural causes at her home in Great Barrington on the evening of Saturday December 26.

"Laury" was born July 14, 1941 in Rock Island, Illinois. She earned three degrees at Washington University in St. Louis, culminating in a doctorate in political science. She taught first at Washington U. and then at Rutgers University, before joining NBC News in New York for sixteen years where she worked on polling and election projections.

The widow of Jerry Epstein, she has two children, architect Greg and chef Debbie, daughter-in-law Naomi Baigell, and three grandchildren, Tali, Soyer, and Kiko.

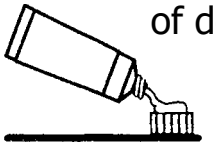
Laury served on the boards of Berkshire Grown, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Green Berkshires, and Project Native, and was a beloved member of our community for the last thirty years, with a wide circle of devoted friends.

Donations in her memory can be made to Berkshire Grown c/o Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home, 426 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA 01230. To send remembrances to her family please go to finnertyandstevens.com.

Because Laury loved people, the family plans an in-person gathering in her memory once Covid-19 is a memory and Donald Trump is in hiding.

DR. JERROLD RAAB
Dentist

All phases
of dentistry



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Remembrance
Pamela Burlington Somers

Above: Now We Are Six! Birthday by the Lake. Arthur S. Somer's great grandchildren with dark-haired Pam on the left, and Steffie, Cindy, and Artie.

Pamela Somers died in the early morning of January 22, in New York City, following a short illness. Ms. Somers was born in New York on August 10, 1943.

Pamela attended Rosehaven School in Rockleigh, NJ; her boarding school years were spent at the School of the Holy Child in Suffern, NY; she attended Rosemont College and graduated from Georgetown University with a degree in linguistics. While Pam had a great ear for language, she was also a talented pianist, and her little sister Hilary remembers her practicing "Moonlight Sonata" endlessly!

In 1965 Pamela entered the field of computing and systems analysis—a profession which was often closed to women. Over the years she served a wide range of clients including the Holland American Cruise Lines, the City of New York, helping set up their 911 system, and computer security firms.

She loved looking over the East River from her thirty-second floor apartment at 20 Waterside Plaza in New York City, and hosted annual Fourth of July fireworks parties. Always independent, she was proud of her service as an auxiliary policewoman and wore her uniform and badge with pride. A fierce New Yorker, Pam spent her later years devoted to protecting and feeding grateful squirrels and writing about them in a newsletter.

The eldest daughter of Arthur and Alice Somers of Rockleigh, NJ, Pam spent her summers at "Rock Ridge," where the family summered for four generations on Monterey's Lake Garfield. She is survived by her sole remaining sibling, Hilary Somers Deely of Stockbridge, MA, and beloved nieces and nephews Hilary Somers of Palo Alto, CA, Seneca Spurling of San Francisco, CA, Mary Sedgwick Deely of Atwater Village, CA, and Philip Lawrence Somers Deely of Kona, Hawaii, and many cousins.

Ms. Somers will be memorialized on the Somers Family website (somersfamily.net) which she designed. Donations may be made in her name to Urban Utopia Wildlife Rehabilitation at urbanutopiawildlife.org.

—Phil Deely, Stockbridge

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A hawk near Gould Farm. —Bonsai Cox

Snowy Owl Migration

The sudden appearance of arctic Snowy Owls along our New England coastline about every four years is called an "irruption" because it is unpredictable. For instance, in the winter of 2013 into 2014 they arrived in surprising numbers coming down through parts of southern Canada into the United States, with a few as far as Florida. They seem to stop at Eastern seaboard locations that have bleak open areas similar to the tundra they came from. Within a day's drive from my seaside home on Little Bay in Fairhaven I saw them on Crescent Beach, Angelica Point, and West Island for several subsequent years approximately where they first landed. We also had reports of their having to be removed from airport runways to avoid their entering into the engine rotors of jet planes landing and taking off. The extent of their geographical movements annually may be tied to cycles of their favorite prey, the lemmings. The lemming population is partially dependent on variations of winter weather which affects their reproductive rate, and the availability of lemmings impacts the actual snowy owl population.

My illustration of a female snowy owl shows her much darker coloring than the male. The females are also larger in size. These two differences make for easy identification. Females don't reach sexual maturity until at least three years. The amount of lemmings available impacts the number of eggs she will lay, which in good conditions can be as many as ten. Ornithologists will often see up to thirty dead lemmings left at the nest by her mate, allowing her to incubate until her eggs hatch out and the young are on their own. The availability of prey seems to drive much of the Arctic ecosystem. When a boom in the population of Snowy Owls results, the competition for hunting territories pushes owls to move and result in an expansion southward. It is thought that explains the remarkable examples of irruption. When the Snowy Owls surprisingly appear, coasting down the sky on silent wings, for birdwatchers it might seem to be an atmospheric indicator of the coming of a severe winter, but it's not ever so simple.

In December of 2013 Norman Smith organized a team of scientists to find out more about the Snowy Owl migration. He began banding as many as possible with GPS transmitters around their wings so it would not interfere with flight in any >

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Here's a Thought

It's January 18 as I write this, the day set aside this year to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. And it's 2021, which means our country, and our world, still remain in many ways under siege, from Covid and from a lack of civil discourse. So here's a thought, or two, or more.

The first thoughts I want to offer to you here are ones written by Dr. King from the Birmingham Jail in 1967":

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

Or maybe not so indirectly at all. It may be time to share this story.

Most of my first- through eighth-grade education took place in a rural four-room, double-graded schoolhouse on the grounds of Sacred Heart Catholic parish in Bowmansville, a tiny hamlet in western New York. In third grade, or thereabouts, my best friend Jackie and I decided we wanted to take piano lessons. Her mother, or mine, found us a teacher.

She was an elderly nun whose name I don't recall, probably because Jackie and I only called her Sister, as in Yes, Sister, or the very occasional, No, Sister. During the two to three years that she was our teacher, our mothers alternated the task of chauffeuring us country mice to the convent in downtown Buffalo where Sister taught us, page by page and book by book, John Thompson's *Modern Course for the Piano*. The piano where she had us follow that series stood in a small room in an old red-brick building that faced directly onto the sidewalk that flanked the wide city street.

Mary Kate Jordan

Sometimes an apocalyptic moment is like the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly: a crossing of the bar, an invitation to let go and let a more beautiful self enter the world.

Our half-hour lessons, one right after the other, always went by fairly quickly. Not so much so for the time either of us spent waiting with the chauffeur of the week in the cramped, dark anteroom between the hallway and the room housing the piano. One hot sunny day my mother, or Jackie's, suggested I go outside rather than just sit and wait.

I made my way through the door, squinted in the bright afternoon light and registered surprise that the street and sidewalks were nearly empty. I thought that "downtown" meant perpetually busy but the only other person I could see was a girl about my age on a stoop across the street. Since I was shy and also in her territory, I suspect it was she who hollered hello first.

We started talking and I crossed the street. Soon we were in happy conversation on the stoop right outside her door, friends so new and so in synch we might not even have exchanged names yet. Then her face lit up. She jammed her hand into a pocket, pulled out something that she treasured, and smiled.

"Want some?" she asked me. She opened her fist and extended her hand.

I stared at the cluster of Good & Plenty candy on her open palm. I smiled back and started to choose one of the pink and white sugar-coated licorice pastilles. Even though they were my favorite treats, I knew it wouldn't be polite to take more than one.

"*Never* take *candy* from a *stranger*!"

I only heard it between my ears, but it was my mother's no-argument voice. And I'd had an encounter several years before that taught me that even someone in the neighborhood, someone who'd been in my house, could be that kind of stranger. And this new friend, well, I hardly knew her. Wasn't she a stranger, too?

I stared at the candy in her hand, salivating, my hand poised and frozen. Her harsh and sudden sobs broke my trance.

"It's because I'm black, isn't it?" she cried out. "It is, isn't it? Because I'm black." An avalanche of tears flooded down her face.

In that tragic, apocalyptic moment for my generous young companion, I stared with my mouth open, unable to speak. Her mother, a fierce, stately woman appearing about eight feet tall, opened the door. She swept her weeping daughter behind her >

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way. This program was called Operation Snowstorm, and was coordinated with other bird banding programs to help locate the best destinations where they could be netted for inspection and banding. Before releasing an owl, its weight and condition is recorded. The tracking devices record every three days how high it is flying, the direction it is headed, and how fast it is moving. The data is stored for five years to be reviewed and evaluated. The data showed that Snowys were more active at night during the winter. This information meant that the best time to trap for banding, and to remove them from airports for relocation, is after dark. The number of GPS locations transmitted are important to understanding the fundamentals of Snowy Owl migration, and how to best establish conservation programs like Snowstorm for the future. We still have a lot to learn.

—George B. Emmons

Here's a Thought, *cont. from page 21*

with a Mama Bear gesture and looked down at me. Her face was a mask of control.

"You'd better go now," was all she said. One arm held her daughter behind her body. Her other hand closed the door. And here I am now, sixty-five or more years later, standing on that stoop staring at that door while my fingers move across my keyboard. It was a heart-shredding loss of innocence for both of us girls, and apocalyptic in its effects.

Our traditional mainstream culture began to use the words apocalypse and apocalyptic to refer to "the cataclysmic disaster to fulfill the will of God described in the Biblical book of Revelation." But the Greek root word, Ἀποκάλυψις actually means *an uncovering*, *a revealing, laying bare, disclosing, or even unveiling*. It was a Greek vocabulary word used in a specific context, not the meaning of the Greek word itself.

So I feel comfortable using that word to describe the experience of essential rejection felt by my generous young companion. It was made of the systemic pattern in place long, long before it became lyrics from the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *South Pacific*. As the song says, "You've got to be taught to hate and fear. You've got to be taught from year to year. Its got to be drummed in your dear little ear. You've got to be carefully taught."

Hell-driven personal, cultural, and ancestral experiences taught that little girl and her mother that they, and theirs, were hated by me and mine. Those experiences, and our encounter that day, seared them both.

I was seared, too. My inability to explain that I'd been forbidden to take candy from a stranger, any stranger, was my parallel apocalyptic moment. I, a white girl living in an all-white farming town, became aware that l live in white skin. I became aware that what color skin someone lives in communicates infinitely more than anything that I had any idea it did.

Don't take candy from a stranger; still good advice. Obey your mother; good advice again. Be generous with what you treasure. Protect your daughter from harm, both my mother and hers aiming toward the same goal. We were four for four. My skin, her skin, and everything those basic facts of life contained then, and contain today, are facts of life I was ignorant of before that moment. As a white girl, I could afford that expensive ignorance; they couldn't.

I'm still unwrapping all of this, aware of how deeply we girls and our mothers were caught in swollen streams of cultural forces and best intentions. I've come to some clarity, though my process is still underway.

Unveilings, revealings, don't have to be apocalyptic in the cataclysmic sense, even though they do require courage. Maybe it's time for us to start to listen to ourselves, and to each other, with an ear to the closed door between us. Maybe it's time to consider that every one of us is real, even strangers, even "them," the ones who don't fit our ideas of tribe or family. Maybe it's time to begin to unveil our fears and defenses to ourselves, and then maybe even to each other. After all, none of us actually knows what grief any one of the rest of us is carrying around.

—Mary Kate Jordan

Wildlife Report,
Late December to mid-January

The opossums (or possums) are out and about. There is no hibernation for them, and in the snow we have now we can see the five-toed tracks and the drag mark of the long chilly tail. Wendy Jensen of New Marlborough Road saw some tracks just before Christmas, and Steve Snyder got a good photograph (left below) of possum tracks by the Burkharts' house at Gould Farm.

In mid-January the Banners on Griswold Road saw a possum one night and then a few days later took a very good photograph (top right). With their unprotected tails and ears (no fur), the possums often get some frostbite in their first cold winter.

Steve Snyder wrote in early January of seeing three big bobcats together in a field, also a much smaller bobcat crossing the road in Becket. This one was "big house cat size."

Near the Gould Farm gravel pit, Steve saw tracks of coyotes, bobcats, and probably foxes, and in the sky above the gravel pit, a Bald Eagle. Steve says the eagle was "I assume making its commute from Lake Buel to Lake Garfield."

Steve has been seeing porcupine tracks and followed one such trail to a Balsam Fir tree behind Bidwell House. Here on Hupi Road we still have our culvert-dwelling porcupine in residence, who goes in and out every day leaving a broad trail. There are porcupines across the road in Beartown State forest, too. One slapped twenty-five to thirty quills in the nose of our young dog Rocky in mid-January when we were scrambling up the cobble (Hunger Mountain).

Lin Saberski wrote in about birds visiting the feeder down by Lake Garfield. They see chickadees, titmice, Blue Jays, and a Downy Woodpecker. She sent photographs of the woodpecker at the suet, and in one (at left) you can also see a titmouse with its crest lowered. It does not look so "tufted."

Yesterday I heard a Downy Woodpecker drumming here for the first time this year. This is a spring sound, quite different from the irregular tapping which is foraging for food. Drumming is a signal, territorial and self-advertising.

Steve Snyder was up on Bob's Way trail and visited the beaver pond way up the road in the lee of Chestnut Hill. He saw two otters gamboling in the open water by the dam. I have recently seen two beavers in this pond, but over by the new beaver house in the middle, built up against the turned-up big root pad of an old dead spar that finally fell over.

Steve sent in the first bear report of this new year, seen crossing a road. He also reports a Red Fox crossing Curtis Road and a Barred Owl on a maple branch near the Gould Farm community building. Wendy Jensen told me of two glorious red foxes near their house, maybe the same two that Steve Moore wrote about hearing in the night in the middle of December. (See *February Foxes*, page 9.)

Carol Edelman came upon a Barred Owl on Hupi Woods Circle. The handsome bird was dead, though we don't know what killed her. She was perfect, with deep warm eyes, furred legs, and curved talons. The feathers of her face were also like fur and the Edelmans enjoyed examining and admiring this big wild creature before passing her along to us. Joe weighed her: twelve-and-a-half ounces. We gave her back to the wilds, with appreciation.

Karin Williams on Cronk Road had a visit from six coyotes early in January, most exciting, and Michelle Arnot watched a coyote in the snow on West Street in Sandisfield in mid-January. She sent a photo (above) of this coyote having just pounced on the snow, maybe after a mouse under there.

Here at home we have had a good cast of visitors at the feeders, including many gorgeous squirrels, some grey and some black. Among birds, there have been the usual suspects, as well as a Red-Breasted Nuthatch, and one day perched in the nearby sumacs, a Sharp-shinned Hawk looking for a meal. Some of the small birds just vanished, others held perfectly still.

In the middle of January I got exciting news of a mountain lion just over the line in Otis near the Johnny Tonlino Auto Parts Yard. A new friend over there saw the lion quite clearly, leaving no doubt.

Thank you for your wild news and enthusiasm.

— Bonner McAllester
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— Don Coburn, Chair
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Contributions from local artists this month:
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George Emmons, p. 20;
Bonner McAllester and Joan Kleban, p. 9

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